First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

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With pictures of children in the background, Carol Bellamy meets the United Nations press corps in her first news conference after becoming UNICEF Executive Director.

Carol Bellamy speaks out:

"I have the best job in the world"

On 1 May 1995, Carol Bellamy took over as the fourth Executive Director of UNICEF. She came to the organization from the US Peace Corps, where she had been Director since 1993. She has also been an investment banker, President of the New York City Council and a member of the New York Senate. **First Call for Children** ***spoke with her at UNICEF House a few days before she took over the helm of UNICEF.***

Why did you take the job?
At the Peace Corps I used to say that I had the best job in Washington. Now I think I have the best job in the world. It's an extraordinary organization and a wonderful opportunity. I can't think of anything I'd rather be doing — UNICEF is the only organization that could have yanked me away from the Peace Corps.

What skills do you think are important in this job?
People who head organizations hopefully bring a range of skills. I think you need to be both a leader and a manager, and the two are interrelated. Merely a 'green-eyeshade' manager is not going to do it, nor is a leader without some capability of providing some management skills. I hope I will be able to bring both leadership and management skills.

What are your initial priorities?
I believe it is very important when you come to a new job that you listen and speak to people and learn before saying, 'OK, here are the first 10 things we are going to do'. That doesn't mean that things won't happen — I'd be bored to death if I didn't try to make some things happen, and I may ultimately make an adjustment here and there. But there is momentum at UNICEF and I don't want to stop the momentum. The World Summit for Children and the Convention on the Rights of the Child have set out a blueprint.

What do you think is the biggest challenge facing UNICEF?
I think it is facing organizational, management and administrative challenges. All challenges are overcomable, but I suspect few people would deny that we could probably run this place a little bit more efficiently and effectively. I believe passionately in that because it allows us to do even more or to do what we are doing better. I think another challenge to UNICEF is to continue to identify central resources, not only governmental but also to build on the enormously good strength it has through its National Committees.

We also need to have a comfortable

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Out of school but still learning

By Rachael Lavender

On a warm May morning in 1994, Dang, a young worker in a sauce-making factory in Thailand's north-east town of Udon Thani, was one of 20 employees given the day off from work to participate in an innovative peer education programme. Its purpose was to enable young workers to advise their colleagues, friends and family members about how to avoid being infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

In a country where an estimated 600,000 people are infected with HIV, educating young people has become a top priority. Since in Thailand the virus is mostly spread through unprotected sex, particularly in the widespread commercial sex industry, changing young people's sexual attitudes and behaviour is the primary challenge for HIV/AIDS educators, among whom the most successful are often young people themselves.

"I've had some other training about AIDS, but this was the best," Dang says

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Study links declines in child mortality and population growth

If countries want to slow population growth, they should reduce under-five mortality. That is the conclusion drawn in a study commissioned by UNICEF. The study, *Under-five Mortality, Fertility and Their Relationship to Population Growth*, reports on the first convincing behavioural model linking improvements in child survival with lower fertility and population growth. The study shows that the links are even stronger when considering other interactive factors such as contraception, breastfeeding and female education.

These findings are striking, according to the author of the study, Dr. P. D. Sharma, a mathematical modeller with the Institute of Economic Growth at the University of Delhi. "The findings suggest that if countries implemented the programmes to meet the World Summit for Children mortality-reduction goals, they would stabilize population at about 7 billion people before the middle of the next century," says Dr. Sharma. "That figure is nearly 1 billion lower than the United Nations low projection of world population."

UNICEF has long advocated reducing child mortality as one means to promote children's protection, survival and development. At the 1990 World Summit for Children, delegates set a year 2000 goal of reducing infant and under-five child mortality rates by one third, or to 50 and 70 per 1,000 live births, respectively, whichever is lower. This goal, along with others aimed at helping women and children, supports UNICEF's strategy to help reverse the downward spiral of poverty, rapid population growth and environmental degradation — the 'PPE spiral'.

Until recently, however, the connection between decline in population growth and UNICEF's child survival strategies — including immunization, oral rehydration therapy and breastfeeding, to name a few — has been clouded by doubts and inconclusive data. Without reliable data, many people assumed that lowering child mortality rates would increase population growth.

To address these concerns, UNICEF commissioned Dr. Sharma to construct a model of the interactive linkages of child survival, fertility, family planning patterns and population growth. He was helped by an advisory group of experts in modelling, demography and epidemiology that included Lawrence R. Klein, a Nobel Laureate; Steven W. Sinding, from the Rockefeller Foundation; John Bongaarts, from the Population Council; Robert Northrup, of Brown University; and UNICEF participants.

Dr. Sharma's model uses data from 99 developing countries. In addition to mortality, fertility and population indicators, he also analyses the key factors influencing these trends: female literacy, per capita income, urban poverty, contraceptive prevalence, breastfeeding, immunization, oral rehydration therapy, nutrition, maternal mortality, sanitation and access to information technology. His ultimate aim is to find out what happens to population growth when countries work towards the year 2000 goal of reducing child mortality.

The model shows that when under-five mortality rates decline steadily between 1991 and 2000, reaching the year 2000 goal, the population of the 99 countries is reduced by 111 million people by the end of the decade. Moreover, Dr. Sharma found that a population declines most where under-five mortality is lowest. For example, in India, which has among the world's highest under-five mortality and population growth rates, steady achievement of the under-five mortality reduction goal over the decade will result in a population figure that is 12 million lower than the World Bank projection of 1 billion by the year 2000.

Easing population pressure

How can reducing child mortality ease population pressure? Dr. Sharma shows that when children die before they turn five, couples resist family planning measures, presumably so they can increase their chances of bearing children who will reach maturity. In addition, a woman who loses an infant or young child shortens her subsequent birth intervals by several months, thereby increasing fertility.

The strong impact of child mortality on family planning and fertility also works in reverse. In fact, contraceptive prevalence proves to be the most effective single intervention in decreasing both children's mortality and mothers' fertility. As Dr. Sharma points out, any family planning method that avoids

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Oral polio vaccine is administered to a Lebanese baby.

WHO launches massive polio immunization campaign

Polio may soon disappear from the Earth, according to WHO, which celebrated World Health Day on 7 April by launching the world's largest immunization campaign against the disease. This multi-nation drive, estimated to reach over 100 million children, supports 'A World without Polio: Target 2000', WHO's ongoing campaign to rid the world of the disease by the century's end.

A contagious disease that mostly strikes children, poliomyelitis leaves its worst victims irreversibly crippled. The polio virus is spread by contaminated water and human waste, in which it can live outside a human host for up to three months.

Thanks to efforts by WHO, UNICEF, Rotary International and government donors — including Canada, Japan and the United States — polio has been eradicated in 145 countries. In 1994, WHO declared the entire western hemisphere polio-free, and the region is soon to be joined by the Western Pacific. Despite these impressive results, the disease remains a problem in the rest of the world. It is endemic in South Asia and most of West and Central Africa.

To mark World Health Day, Operation 'Mecacar' (a word formed from the names of the participating countries and regions) was launched in 18 countries of the Middle East, the Caucasus and Central Asian Republics. It targeted 70 million children during two National Immunization Days in April and May. These countries were joined by 14 others around the world whose National Immunization Days were expected to reach an additional 45 million children. In preparation for these immunization campaigns, UNICEF shipped more than 180 million doses of the polio vaccine to participating countries.

Communicators for Children

By Maribel Cuervo de Paredes

The UNICEF Communicators for Children project has opened new vistas for the 15 print and broadcast journalists from Panama who have volunteered to investigate and publicize children's issues.

Launched in October 1992, the programme has gathered — from the fields of photography, video and film, TV and radio broadcasting, communications and investigative journalism — a diverse group of people committed to a common cause: to give children's issues the same professional treatment devoted to other subjects in the media. As a condition of membership, the participants must have published or produced material relevant to children; several have won UNICEF's National Press Award for their work.

Immediately after their initial meeting, the group members plunged into the first of UNICEF's monthly working tours to investigate the conditions of children in indigenous areas and in regions producing sugar and bananas. Since 1994, volunteers have also taken part in UNICEF-sponsored training seminars on such issues as child labour, child rights, baby-friendly hospitals and breastfeeding.

In the short period since the programme began, several of the 'communicators for children' have produced films, articles, interviews and other important works designed for national distribution. Three of their articles on violence and adolescent girls were published in the UNICEF Panama magazine.

In May 1994, three winners of the first UNICEF National Press Awards presided over a forum, 'Childhood and Democracy', conducted by the Ministry of Education with UNICEF support. It gave children a platform to air their views on important topics and exercise their right to be heard.

The 'communicators for children' plan to seek wide distribution for their work in such venues as university round tables, public schools and the print and broadcast media. As they spread the word on the needs and rights of children, they encourage their colleagues to join them in this important work.

Maribel Cuervo de Paredes is a journalist in Panama.

"The best job..."

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balance between core work, emergency work and advocacy. Every organization, no matter how efficient or effective it is, really needs to be ever-vigilant about asking itself, 'Why am I here and what am I doing and is the programming as relevant and as vital and as up-to-date as it can possibly be?' Are we really meeting needs, are we doing capacity-building, is this continuing to head UNICEF into the 21st century? So (my priorities are) management, finance and programming — how's that? Simple, right?

How do you address the conflict between headquarters' priorities and the varying needs and priorities in the many countries where UNICEF works?

I don't see ever being able to put entirely back into the box that concern the field always has that things are top down, or the concern that headquarters sometimes has that the field is going off in who knows what direction. That doesn't mean one shouldn't try. And I think that headquarters always has to remain vigilant, no matter how sexy the press release might read, to make sure that its potential initiatives are consistent with reaching people at the local level.

At the same time, I think that one of the successes of UNICEF has been its ability to articulate some specific, concrete directions, and that is helpful in building a constituency around the world. There is a healthy plateful of priorities out there right now and I wouldn't anticipate introducing a whole bunch of new ones at this point.

Do you see any changes in relationships between UNICEF and NGOs?

I can't really answer that question because I don't really know these relationships very well yet. There may be some instances in which it's appropriate for UNICEF to say, 'We just can't do this additional thing, or working together with this organization makes a lot of sense'. I am a strong believer in collaboration. And I certainly would see NGOs being one of those areas where there is potential room for increased collaboration.

What about the Management Study?

I think it will prove to be quite helpful in identifying some processes and some areas that need improvement.

You see it as essentially a positive thing?

I absolutely do. I think change scares people but it shouldn't. It doesn't mean that everything will change, but the more we can focus our resources on what UNICEF is about, the better off we are. If there are aspects here that allow us to streamline, to avoid some duplication, to have a better accounting of how we spend our money, to encourage a better relationship with the Board, I think all of those could be quite helpful.

AIDS peer counselling

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about her workshop. Among the activities were small-group brainstorming sessions and role-playing. These strategies gave Dang and the other participants an understanding of the devastating prevalence of HIV infection and AIDS, and how best to avoid them. Pre- and post-training questionnaires confirmed that the trainees understood what they were learning.

Armed with their new knowledge, Dang and the others received materials produced by the Red Cross, including flip charts, comic books and calendars with AIDS education messages. Of all the materials, the comic books proved to be the most popular in the factories, where workers found them informative and easy to read.

"After they read them they realized the dangers of AIDS, and so many of them came to ask me for extra information," says Noy, one of the trainees. "I explained to them that they should always wear a condom, they shouldn't share needles and they shouldn't go to prostitutes. I also talked to them about helping people with HIV and not discriminating against people who are HIV-positive."

Peer education is the cornerstone of the Udon Thani project, begun in 1993, and others like it set up in neighbouring provinces of Nong Khai. These projects form part of a large-scale programme launched by the Thai Red Cross in 1990 with the help of about US$600,000 from UNICEF. The projects make use of the resources at teachers colleges to train instructors in HIV/AIDS education skills and community outreach.

In the past six years, Nigeria has wiped out 90 per cent of cases of guinea worm disease, thanks to the National Guinea Worm Eradication Project. Safe water is essential to the effort (above). The project trains village-based health workers, provides safe water to affected areas, treats village water sources and supports surveillance by health authorities. Nigeria still has 35,000 cases of the disease, which it hopes to eradicate by the end of 1995.

At Udon Thani Teachers College, the staff of the Preventive Drug Education Centre received its initial training from the Thai Red Cross. Afterwards, the centre's Director, Varanya Jeeravipoolvarn, met with factory owners and union heads to win their support for the programme. Once they agreed to participate, they selected employees to send to the peer education sessions. "People who attend should be popular and well known in the workplace and have good communication skills," Ms. Jeeravipoolvarn explains.

Dang's boss, Wara Piyachat-Sakul, is enthusiastic about the programme. "My workers have a very low status in society so they don't normally have the chance for this sort of training or education," he says. His factory was one of 1,848 in 17 provinces to participate in HIV/AIDS education programmes.

Rachael Lavender is an Information Officer for the UK Committee for UNICEF.

UNICEF/94-0115/Demaio

In the Antohamadinika neighbourhood of Antananarivo, women dump their organic garbage into composting bags.

Garbage worth its weight in gold

By Jean-Michel Delmotte

Crowded and polluted, Madagascar's capital city, Antananarivo, has the chaotic look of a city that has grown too quickly. During the rainy season, as household waste washes down from the hills to the lowlands, the city, familiarly known as 'Tana' by its more than 1 million inhabitants, becomes a health hazard. People face increased risk of disease, including malaria, diarrhoea and even the plague.

Yet in the crowded quarter of Antohamadinika, a neighbourhood squeezed between a green garden and a filthy canal, conditions are beginning to improve, thanks to the determined efforts of the community.

The improvements began in 1992 when residents formed a voluntary organization. Less than two years later, they had established a health centre and helped to build a school. Now the group is tackling the dirty job of garbage disposal.

"We were impressed by the will of this little community and by the efforts they had made to take charge and to find the answer for their most urgent needs: health, a school for children, the betterment of their environment," says Marianne Clark-Hattingh, Officer-in-Charge of UNICEF's urban project for the country. "We responded immediately to their call."

According to Ms. Clark-Hattingh, UNICEF began by putting the group in touch with Terre des hommes, a Swiss NGO, for help in sanitation and primary health care. Today, the community association itself has NGO status.

"We call ourselves 'SOA Iombonambe', which means 'united for the common good', since we are stronger when we join forces," says Martin Razafindrabe, General Secretary of the community association.

From garbage to gold

Now, the community's garbage, instead of rotting and attracting flies and disease, is turned into valuable compost. The idea, proposed by Michel, a market gardener, is simple.

Large plastic bags are filled with 50 or 60 kilograms of assorted garbage (metal and plastic are removed). The bags are sealed and left to decompose for 10 days. During this time, the internal temperature reaches 60 degrees Celsius, the perfect temperature to kill harmful bacteria while preserving those that help the composting process. The humidity and heat in Madagascar are ideal for composting, enabling organic matter to decompose naturally and quickly to create excellent quality soil.

Finally, holes are punched into the plastic and seedlings are planted. The bags, which are watered weekly, provide excellent protection against weeds and birds. Tomatoes, onions, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, parsley and a variety of greens, all very nutritious, are among the produce grown.

"Imagine, we are producing a harvest every 15 days," says Helen Rakrisy, who owns the land where the compost is made, and who has graciously offered its use for two years. "That is eight times faster than the traditional way of planting."

Multiple benefits

Transforming garbage into compost enriches diets and provides income from the sale of the produce. "The goal is to improve our diets," says Mr. Razafindrabe. "But the people also recognize an opportunity for financial gain, which will allow them to buy more rice, the staple food." The wise use of land also prevents further deforestation of Madagascar's forests.

The initial outlay for the sack — 1,000 FMG or 50 US cents — is recouped after the first harvest.

UNICEF has bought 10,000 sacks, which are being distributed through other NGOs as well as schools and parent/teacher associations throughout the capital. UNICEF has contributed a total of US$7,300 to the project.

Jean-Michel Delmotte is a former consultant for UNICEF Madagascar.

This story was adapted from the UNICEF Features Service.

Dusting off data: Project unearths child statistics

By Victoria Ebin

More than 170 governments have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and many are taking steps to implement the provisions of the historic document. This process requires analysing indicators that measure progress on child rights, welfare and development. Two years ago, Childwatch International, a human rights NGO based in Norway, launched an eight-country pilot project in Senegal to gather and analyse data on children. So far, its expert team has unearthed troves of unused data, which they plan to supplement with new information.

The Childwatch 'indicators project' has become a voyage of discovery for its four-member team in Senegal, as they venture into dusty closets and peruse neglected files in the offices of ministries and NGOs to track down data on children. Shaking the dust from a folder, Sidy Gueye, the quantitative expert on the project, laments, "Now *this* is an indicator of child rights."

Judith Ennew, the project's Director and a member of Childwatch's Executive Board, expressed similar concern. "If the state of data on children is any indication of the state of children," she says, "the situation is alarming indeed."

Childwatch launched the pilot study for its worldwide indicators project in Senegal in August 1993 to test whether the data already gathered could be used to monitor child rights. The project was carried out in consultation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (which monitors compliance with the Convention) and UNICEF. It focused initially on children's health and employment and has now expanded to encompass all areas of survival, welfare and development covered in the Convention. A preliminary list of countries that will participate in the project includes Armenia, Belgium, Chile, Nicaragua, Thailand, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe.

"The Childwatch project will help us calibrate the rights of the child and develop common standards to measure the impact of our work," says Raymond Chevalier, Regional Director of PLAN International, a development-oriented NGO participating in the project. "It's the only way to make organizations accountable for their resources."

To be useful, the data must be disaggregated, or broken down by age, sex, ethnicity and other factors. As Ms. Ennew says, "There is a pressing need to break down data and have information that is specific to each country."

Such child-centred indicators will allow the Committee on the Rights of the Child to assess how children are affected by situations that are often underreported or viewed as controversial, such as polygamy, divorce, migration and foster homes. Finely tuned data could also measure the impact on children of outside interventions, such as structural adjustment.

Even for experts like those on the Senegal team, obtaining data is often difficult. Sometimes it simply does not exist, or — as is too often the case — it is insufficient in quantity and quality. Another problem is institutions that collect rich data and do nothing with it.

One of the team's favourite stories is about their discovery of boxes full of never-analysed information in a government office in Dakar. Every month for years, the office had been collecting meticulous, handwritten data on hundreds of children in especially difficult circumstances, including information on ethnicity, age and sex. A major problem with the data collected is the varying definition of the child. "In the West, age is the most important feature," says Abdoul Karim Gueye. "Here, it is family alliances and responsibility."

According to the Convention, a child is "every human being under the age of 18." In Senegal, however, the Government sets legal adulthood at 21, but in the penal system it is 18, and the Work Code sets 12 as the minimum age for work within the house. Cultural and tribal norms also factor into the definition. Among the Serer people of Senegal, for example, a girl is considered adult and can marry at 19, whereas a man reaches adulthood at around 27.

In addition to disaggregating data to make it more accessible, the team plans to use it in innovative ways. "Instead of looking at mortality and morbidity figures for those under five, we are looking at the use and quality of services, the need for them and the environment in which children live," says team member Fatou Fall Dia, a social worker.

Whereas information on children's health is relatively abundant, data on child labour are rare, except for a recent UNICEF/International Labour Organisation study of children's employment in Senegal. One problem with much employment data is its unevenness: research tends to be carried out on subjects that grab attention, such as the work of street children, while other forms of children's labour may be neglected. According to Ms. Ennew, children's agricultural work is especially under-researched. "People succumb to this rural myth and assume that because a child is on a mountain goat, everything is fine," she says.

"If the state of the data on children is any indication of the state of children, the situation is alarming indeed."

The work of children within their own households has also been neglected and needs further research. Ms. Ennew says, "We know, for example, about repetitive stress syndrome among athletes, but not its prevalence among children doing repetitive work."

At this midway point in the project, the team members already have recommendations for improving indicators of child rights, and are formulating guidelines for government agencies on how to collect data. They also suggest gathering monthly data in selected schools, hospitals and community organizations. They hope their efforts one day will contribute to answering one of the most pressing needs of the world's children: a central collection site for data on the progress of their rights, welfare and development.

Victoria Ebin is an anthropologist and freelance journalist based in New York.

Teacher empowerment in India: Making schools 'child-friendly'

By Veenu Sandal

Huddled around clusters of brightly coloured paper laid out on the floor of a primary school in rural India, a group of teachers, parents, villagers and children talk animatedly about which educational illustrations they should create next. Their drawings of birds, animals, plants and stories already decorate the classroom walls. These villagers from the Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh, India's largest and one of its poorest states, are part of a remarkable programme that is transforming primary schools from places of drudgery to friendly environments filled with games, dance, song, art and cultural activities.

The programme, called Teacher Empowerment Project (TEP), or Shikshak Samakhya Pariyojana (in Hindi), was launched by the Governments of India and the state of Madhya Pradesh, with UNICEF assistance. It has brought teachers, children, parents, government officials, elected representatives and entire communities together to improve the state's primary schools as part of India's effort to achieve universal primary education. In a state known for high drop-out rates and the poorest education record in India, TEP has already boosted community morale and sent primary school enrolment soaring.

"My friends and I used to hide in the fields and play instead of going to school, where I couldn't understand anything," says 12-year-old Parvati, amazed at the changes TEP has brought about in her community. "When the teachers complained to our parents, we were assigned domestic chores by our parents and freed from the bother of going to school. But now the younger children can hardly wait to get to school."

Parvati's reaction is typical of the enthusiasm for the programme that has quickly spread throughout villages and districts. Begun in the 23 districts covering the first-grade level of approximately 36,000 government primary schools, TEP is now slated for implementation in all 45 districts and 77,000 schools.

More status for teachers

The mainstay of TEP is teacher involvement. Shikshak Samakhya Pariyojana builds teachers' self-confidence and lifts their status in the eyes of the community. By giving them decision-making powers and creative input in the classroom, TEP moves teachers from the periphery of the education process into its very centre.

Teachers have learned how to put their skills and imagination to work in short training/motivation seminars they helped devise in collaboration with two government education institutes. Teachers attend between one and three one-day workshops run by peer-trainers, where they collaborate on devising educational materials and strategies and give each other demonstrations. To increase their motivation and performance on the job, they pledge their continuous attendance and efforts. The seminars, which are slated to train as many as 500 teachers in a single day, are followed up with monthly meetings at designated resource centres where teachers exchange information and ideas. Several of the instructors have won prizes for creating the best resource centres and child-friendly schools.

Aiding these efforts are seminars for local education officials and school headmasters, which introduce them to TEP concepts, encourage their contribution and sensitize them to the needs and rights of teachers. A TEP newsletter circulates to all participants.

"The project has helped the teachers regain their lost pride, dignity, self-respect and self-esteem," notes Sardar Singh Rathore, Headmaster of a middle school in Dhar. "Not only are they enjoying teaching in classrooms, but they have also been able to make it so interesting and effective that children are eager to come to school."

Making school interesting was no small task in Madhya Pradesh, where teachers had to overcome such obstacles as decrepit buildings, a shortage of learning materials, community apathy, mistreatment from supervisors, poor learning retention rates among the students, and high drop-out and low enrolment rates, especially among girls, rural children and children from certain castes and tribes. Conditions in many schools were so bad that teacher absenteeism was widespread.

"Hardly any children came to school anyway," one teacher explains, "and when they did, there were no educational materials."

Compounding these problems were the rigid and outdated instructional methods and materials teachers were expected to employ. Relying almost exclusively on textbook and rote learning, the curriculum was based on Hindi, a language that the majority of children do not speak. Moreover, it showed little sensitivity to the needs and interests of children from different ethnic, tribal and caste groups.

Child-friendly schools

Nowadays, schools are 'child-friendly'. Teaching is enhanced with stories and poems in local dialects, and the rich local folklore is incorporated through dances, songs and art. Students have become active learners, participating in every aspect of their education. They may help prepare classroom materials, plant and care for a tree or sweep and wash floors, walls and walkways. Teachers who once skipped school themselves now spend much of their free time writing poems, painting pictures and creating other lively classroom materials.

Though they provide a joyful learning environment, TEP's child-friendly schools also take learning seriously. They require all students to master the programme's mathematics and language milestones. Moreover, students' progress and attendance rates are tracked at the local and district levels by a new computer database.

The project's immediate goal is to ensure that at least 90 per cent of children aged 6 to 7 enrol in first grade. It also aims to reduce first-year drop-out rates to less than 10 per cent and maintain regular attendance among at least 80 per cent of the children.

Low-cost improvements

Preliminary results are impressive. Rough estimates indicate attendance and learning-retention rates have doubled and tripled since child-friendly schools opened their doors in 1992. More remarkable still is the fact that these improvements have been made at relatively low cost. UNICEF contributes funds for teacher training, painting of classrooms and development of learning materials, about 500 to 800 rupees (US$16 to $26) per school. TEP keeps costs down with low-technology teaching devices, such as the three-foot strips of black paint that serve as blackboards.

"The project has brought about a revolution in the education system," says Mr. Rathore, whose school is situated in one of the state's most challenged districts. Spreading the 'revolution' to primary schools throughout Madhya Pradesh, and perhaps other troubled states, remains a challenge. But this remarkable low-cost, high-impact project has already brought smiles of satisfaction to tens of thousands of children and teachers who never thought learning could be fun. Equally important, it has brought India one step closer to achieving universal primary education by the year 2000.

Veenu Sandal is a freelance writer in India.

Teacher Empowerment Project

Teacher Empowerment Project

A picture — or a learning aid — is worth a thousand words in Madhya Pradesh. At top, an enthusiastic schoolboy identifies a bird. Below, teacher Kalpana Khanwilkan works with students in a class for slow learners.

Iran: Focus on girls

Gender equity and the Convention on the Rights of the Child were among the topics highlighted at the First National Girl Child Seminar and Exhibition in Iran, which took place in Tehran from 23 to 26 January 1995. The first event of its kind in the country, the seminar and exhibition were launched by UNICEF and the Women's Bureau of the President's Office in preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September.

Bringing together over 20 government organizations and NGOs, including Iran's Ministry of Education, the Islamic Women's Association and Children's TV, the event was widely covered by the press. The exhibition, which also encouraged girls' contributions in an art contest and display of traditional costumes, drew 5,000 visitors and participants.

Child mortality study

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births "too soon, too often and too late" dramatically reduces a child's chance of dying in the first five years of life. Several other factors — including female literacy, breastfeeding and immunization — also ensure child survival, lowered fertility, or both.

What do these findings suggest for advocates of child survival and population growth management? "Neither group has to abandon its own objective," Dr. Sharma notes. "Effective interventions to save children's lives and to reduce total fertility work hand in hand to sever the link among population growth, poverty and environmental degradation."

For a copy of the report, contact Programme Division, UNICEF, 3 UN Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.

Clarification

In the January-March 1995 issue of ***First Call for Children***, an article about raising oral rehydration therapy usage in Latin America referred to Barbados as one of four countries with ORT usage rates of 20 per cent or less. Although this figure is not disputed, it should be pointed out that Barbados has fewer than two cases of diarrhoea per every 1,000 children under five, according to PAHO. In addition, 99 per cent of the population has access to ORS, according to WHO.

Passing the torch

As UNICEF makes the transition to a new Executive Director, the torch is also being passed at ***First Call for Children***. Patricia Lone has moved on to oversee two key UNICEF publications, *The Progress of Nations* and *The State of the World's Children*. But the 'torch' is moving just two doors down the hall, where I have been handling the operations of the Features Service for the past two years. I look forward to your comments, contributions and story ideas as I take on the challenge of following in Pat's inspirational footsteps.

With the next issue, ***First Call for Children*** will return to its usual length of 16 pages.

Catharine Way, Editor

UNICEF/Shiva Vitta

Children participating in the National Convention of Child Labourers advocated for the rights of children like this girl, at work in a Calcutta teashop.

Child labourers speak out in India

Braving a light drizzle and heavy rush-hour traffic, 1,100 child labourers from all parts of India and 300 young local sympathizers took to the streets of Madras last December to demand a better future. The young demonstrators cheered, clapped, sang songs, released balloons, shouted slogans and distributed pamphlets with such messages as: "We work for you, will you work for us?"

Representing different castes, cultures, villages, states and types of employment, these children came together to demand better working conditions for themselves and for the 44 million young workers in India who remain voiceless. They carried placards written in different languages but conveying the same message: "We want our rights!"

This historic children's rally was just one of the unusual events that took place at the first National Convention of Child Labourers, held in Madras from 18 to 20 December 1994. The event gave the child workers an important but fun-filled opportunity to speak out about their hopes, goals and demands.

Organized by the Campaign against Child Labour, a Bombay-based NGO that works to restore rights to working children, the Convention included adult participants from 120 Indian organizations, the government of the state of Tamil Nadu, the International Labour Organisation, UNICEF, the media and key officials and opinion-makers.

The purpose of the event was to inform both children and adults about the rights of children to an education, productive employment and vocational training, as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Declaration of the World Summit for Children. Both the Convention and the Declaration are supported by the majority of the world's governments, including India's.

"We have missed our childhood," said Rani, a young labourer from Delhi. Her voice was just one representing the millions of Indian children who are bonded and/or work shifts of 10 to 16 hours a day for as little as 8 rupees (26 US cents) a day or less. "We have had to work but we hope we will have the opportunity to go to school," she said.

Education is a major goal for Rani and children like her who often begin work at the age of 10 or earlier and have no time to learn or play. In addition, these young labourers are prone to sickness and injury from overwork, repetitive tasks, harsh supervision and damp, dusty or dimly lit workspaces.

These and similar working conditions were described by many young participants at the Convention. They included Rupali, a 12-year-old ragpicker from Pune; Shabnam, who stitches clothes for a living in Calcutta; Firoza, who polishes gems; Deepak, from Bihar, and Suresh, from Rajasthan, who weave carpets; and Balakrishnan, a bonded labourer.

For these young workers who shoulder adult responsibilities, the three-day Convention offered a rare chance to behave like children.

Their careworn faces glowed with excitement as they discovered activities that millions of other children take for granted. On huge cloth canvases, some of them painted their homes, families and animals, while others made collages, greeting cards and models of animals, tools and ploughs. Several performed traditional folk dances and songs, while others belted out hit tunes from the latest films.

The fun began during the inauguration ceremony, when the young people entered the brightly decorated halls to cheers, clapping and singing. After fragrant sandalwood paste was put on their foreheads, they were showered with flower petals. Then they took part in a lamp-lighting ceremony, during which they passed a symbolic flame, one to another.

At a press conference, 12 children, aided by translators, described their lives and their hopes. Eleven-year-old Binodini from Orissa asked for "free and compulsory primary education." Jagdish from Rajasthan emphasized the need for "work and better wages for our parents."

"We have missed our childhood," said a young labourer from Delhi.

In a Charter of Demands they presented to the adults, the children spoke of being trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. They called for an end to exploitation of working children and demanded concrete steps for its elimination and for the betterment of their lives.

These demands will be submitted to the respective state governments as well as to India's President, Prime Minister and Union Labour Minister. The children hope the policy makers will respond urgently to their calls for help.

One participant who responded immediately was the noted writer Sivasankari, who promised her support. "Don't get dejected if life seems tough," she told her young listeners. "You should fight your circumstances. We will help you, and slowly the problem will be solved."

The Convention was accompanied by an exhibition that depicted the plight of child labourers in posters, photographs and other materials, many of which were made by the children themselves. Any visitor expressing a desire to help could buy printed postcards addressed to the Prime Minister of India, urging his response to the problem.

When the Convention ended, the children returned home with new feelings of solidarity and hope. Bolstered with knowledge about their rights to education, productive employment and vocational training, they were ready to begin translating those rights into action.

This article was adapted from a report prepared by the Campaign against Child Labour.

Bidding on books: Children learn to love reading

By Meenakshi M. Gautham

The voice that addresses the audience rings clear. "This book is called *The Angry River*," it says. "It is written by Ruskin Bond and it is about a nice little girl who stays with her grandparents on a small island. One day her grandfather falls sick and a storm hits the river." The voice pauses. "Bidding to begin at a minimum price of three *Bookits*. Any takers?"

"Five *Bookits*," shouts an eager reader. "Seven" shrieks a second. The deal is clinched.

This lively book auction was created by high school students in Bangalore in southern India. Books are lent to the highest bidder using small handmade cards, called *Bookits*, as currency.

The book auction is a project of the school's Readers' Club, a concept introduced by the National Book Trust of India (NBT) — a government organization that publishes quality literature in 13 Indian languages at affordable prices. Two years ago, NBT created the National Centre for Children's Literature (NCCL) to further promote the habit of reading.

Reading for fun

Readers' Clubs are designed to get children interested in reading for leisure, pleasure and fun. A Readers' Club is an informal group of children and adults who meet periodically to read, discuss and share books. It is a group in which learning and fun coexist and in which children, from an early age, can learn to love and care for books.

The clubs are housed in the back of classrooms and on verandas — places that are airy and have natural light. Children sit on floor mats and their work is displayed on the walls. Books are made accessible for browsing, handling and borrowing to create a warm, inviting atmosphere. The clubs are encouraged to develop imaginative activities for their members. Some create quizzes and games to test comprehension, others have members illustrate their own stories, still others develop mock book-lending auctions.

A quiet revolution

Schools, NGOs, libraries and non-formal education centres are introduced to the concept of Readers' Clubs through a letter that explains how to begin a club as well as the importance of creating the groups. For added encouragement, NBT also promises a small gift pack of books worth Rs.50 (US$1.50) to help start the club, as well as an annual addition of books worth Rs.25 if the club continues to run successfully.

Readers' Clubs require minimal work and are low-cost, according to Subir Shukla, Editor of NCCL. Schools are encouraged to gather support from banks, hospitals, village *panchayats* (local councils), village elders and senior citizens.

A monthly *Readers' Club Bulletin* is mailed to each club-hosting institution. The *Bulletin* itself, like the rest of the programme, is a low-cost booklet that circulates stories, information and reports on Readers' Club activities. Some of the lively reading material is contributed by the readers themselves.

To date, more than 2,500 Readers' Clubs are already off the ground and many more are poised to take off. The NCCL hopes to establish the clubs in 10,000 schools, targeting government schools and those in remote and rural areas.

Although it is difficult to say what long-term impact the Readers' Clubs will have in this southern Indian state, the short-term benefits are promising. In some schools where the club meets in the morning, the children make it a habit to reach school early. At another school in a slum area, most children had joined nearby libraries within a few months of setting up their Readers' Club. Most heartening, perhaps, is the observation by some teachers that reading has become an enjoyable activity and textbooks seem less of a burden, while there has been noticeable improvement in the children's reading ability.

A group of government schools expressed willingness to open their school to neighbouring Readers' Clubs, and the Indian Consulate in Bhutan has begun forwarding Readers' Club material to its schools. Community involvement has been equally positive and women's organizations, teachers, federations, social welfare NGOs, science forums, educational committees and motivated individuals in almost all the states of the country have contributed to establishing the clubs.

For further information contact: Editor, National Centre of Children's Literature, National Book Trust of India, A-5, Green Park, New Delhi 110 016, India.

Meenakshi M. Gautham is a child development consultant in New Delhi.

First Call for Children

'The essential needs of children should be given priority in bad times as well as good' — *Plan of Action, World Summit for Children*

The next era

Carol Bellamy, UNICEF's fourth Executive Director.

UNICEF is ending its first 50 years with a new beginning, as Carol Bellamy becomes the organization's fourth Executive Director. In a message sent to all staff on 1 May, her first day at the helm, Ms. Bellamy noted that Gandhi once asked world leaders to think of the impact of their decisions on the poorest person they had ever seen.

"I'd like to propose a variation on this sage advice," Ms. Bellamy wrote. "As we make our daily decisions and as we go about our daily jobs at UNICEF, let us visualize a child ... and let us ponder the impact of what we are doing or what we are deciding on that fragile and marvellous creature of God."

With that advice in mind, this issue of ***First Call for Children*** has some straight talk from child labourers in India about what they would *like* us to do to better their daily lives. A project begun in Senegal shows the importance of sharing information about efforts on behalf of children. And a study by P. D. Sharma demonstrates the links between reducing child mortality and slowing population growth.

In an interview, Carol Bellamy also gives us some of her initial thoughts about the challenges facing UNICEF and the road ahead.

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NGO Action for Children

Produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF

Building on strength: A future for South Africa

By Sara Ann Friedman

When Dumisani Kumalo turned six, his father took him to downtown Johannesburg to buy his first pair of shoes, which he needed to enter school. Although he was illiterate, Mr. Kumalo knew that education was the most powerful weapon in waging the war against apartheid. Although he could not read the signs over the entrance to the shoe store, he knew which door to enter. And inside the store, he handed the salesperson a piece of string the length of his boy's foot, knowing that his son could neither try on the shoes nor return them if they didn't fit. The word 'apartheid' was never uttered in Mr. Kumalo's home. Yet, at least as much as the highly publicized violence, the daily indignities of apartheid defined the lives of black children growing up in South Africa.

"It is a wonderful new day," said Mr. Kumalo. Representing the American Committee on Africa/ African Fund, he was sharing these memories with participants at a Forum called 'The Impact of Apartheid on Children in South Africa'. "But the scars are deep and cannot be ignored."

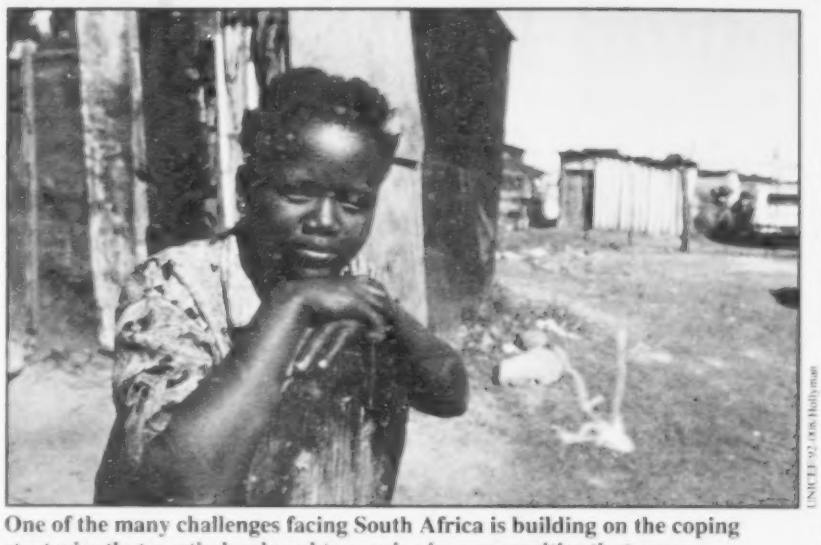
Held in February 1995 at UNICEF House in New York and co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on UNICEF and the NGO Committee on Southern Africa, the forum examined the legacy for today's children of generations of legitimized public violence and degradation. Participants agreed that the new challenge for the governments and NGOs who work with children is to ease the transition from a state of conflict to a state of normalcy and to balance real problems with realistic hope.

The first task is to understand the damage caused by centuries of violence and discrimination and by a migrant labour system that dissolved community bonds and dismembered families. The euphoria of the moment should not block out the reality that generations of harm cannot be eradicated overnight.

For example, the best resources and efforts will not significantly reduce infant mortality rates in a day or even a year; that will take a generation, according to Dr. Pat Naidoo, Medical Officer of the African National Congress. And while a neighbourhood is an important niche for child development, how do you turn squatter settlements into neighbourhoods for 7 million people? Prohibiting migrant labour alone will not change the economic realities, reduce the 42 per cent unemployment rate or help those — 61 per cent of the population — who live below the absolute poverty level.

"Merely opening the school system will not reduce the educational lag," said Dr. Naidoo. "What does a black child free to attend any school learn in a classroom with a teacher trained in the apartheid educational system of hierarchy and injustice, where innovation has been stifled, the soul murdered?" Indeed, how does a student from a profoundly deprived background learn to perform at the same level as one who comes from generations of privilege?

Applying to children the knowledge about post-traumatic stress disorder and 'combat neurosis' learned from working with soldiers, "we have a better understanding today of how children respond to stressful circumstances and what it does to their learning capacity," said Felton Earls, a professor and child psychiatrist at Harvard Medical School. Violence has been the daily experience of all children, preparing for war their rite of passage. Just as vividly as adults, children experience and manifest the symptoms of stress: sleep deprivation, memory failure, anxiety and loss of concentration. They run the risk of falling off the learning track, becoming drop-outs or delinquents.



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One of the many challenges facing South Africa is building on the coping strategies that youth developed to survive in communities that were ungovernable.

At the same time, warned Professor Earls, "we must be careful not to pathologize all problems, but to view them in the context of recovery and reconstruction." Keeping the focus on coping rather than illness and allowing parents to figure how to take care of their own children can be the most cost-effective strategies. These will do more to regain a sense of dignity, self-esteem and control than curative programmes and policies designed and imported from the West.

Under apartheid, energy was focused on a clearly defined enemy. With freedom have also come unfulfilled expectations, emptiness and despair, especially among youth. Two thousand members of this 'lost generation', interviewed in a recent study, said that violence was not as high on their list of concerns as fatalism and a sense that they had no future. These feelings come not from a lack of trust in themselves or their capabilities, but because they cannot see how to use their capacities in the current economic climate. Yet these are the youth who have been running whole townships, who had the ingenuity and sophistication to survive in communities that were ungovernable. In designing interventions, cautioned Dr. Naidoo, NGOs must look closely at coping strategies such as those that emerged during "those terrible years of apartheid."

Gender discrimination

With victory over apartheid, the issue of gender discrimination and violence against girls and women can no longer be pushed aside. According to Dr. Yolanda Richardson, a Programme Officer for the Carnegie Corporation, anti-black violence coupled with patriarchy and anti-female violence made victims out of 50 per cent of the population. These behaviours produced a legacy that is played out in social relationships. A woman is raped in South Africa every 83 seconds, she said; 1 out of 6 has been physically abused. These issues must be addressed by collecting gender-disaggregated data, increasing outreach to girls and women in existing programmes and developing new programmes specifically aimed at girls where resources are especially scarce. (Only 1 per cent of private donor money in South Africa goes to programmes for girls and women.)

Vanquishing its racial demons while ignoring its gender demons would do South Africa and the world a great disservice, pointed out Dr. Richardson. At the same time, the dismemberment of families and the emasculation of men that took place under apartheid can be healed by developing strong emotional bonds with consistent caretakers, along with greater family involvement and responsibility on the part of men.

The task for NGOs in designing interventions for children is to help them harness their positive energy on their own behalf, according to Mary Carlson, a professor of psychiatry and neurobiology at Harvard Medical School and Director of Harvard's Programme on Child Rights and Development. This energy was manifest in the 1992 Children's Charter of South Africa, which children wrote and presented to the new Government. The charter demanded that the Government and all political parties "ensure that children's rights will no longer be ignored in South Africa" and that children are placed "first, not last" on the national agenda.

"With freedom have also come unfulfilled expectations."

The message for NGOs is to focus on children's rights, defined in the Children's Charter and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, rather than on their needs, which leads to a more paternalistic and charity-oriented approach. Material resources should be used not as an end in themselves, said Dr. Carlson, but to enable children, families and communities to acquire what they need so they can make appropriate choices and participate in developing their own sense of identity and self-esteem. The NGO role must be relentlessly supportive rather than directive. For a society like black South Africa, which has lived for so many generations under the cruel and unjust dictatorship of apartheid, even the whisper of well-intended domination can slow its progress towards full control over its own destiny.

Sara Ann Friedman is the editor of **NGO Action for Children**

South African educators consider how to repair decades of neglect

By Drusilla Menaker

The challenge facing South African educators, both black and white, is momentous. More than 1 million of the country's 16 million children between ages 6 and 16 — virtually all black — are not even enrolled in school. An additional 76,000 classrooms are needed to accommodate those who are registered.

These uneducated children are the legacy of decades of government discrimination and neglect. To South Africa's former apartheid government, the squatter camps were home to millions who officially did not exist. Whatever minor concessions were made to educate black children did not include building schools for the 'non-existent'. In many settlements, parents banded together to create the semblance of a school. They convinced jobless neighbours who had some level of education, even the equivalent of a high school diploma, to teach their children. They taught in cardboard huts without texts, desks or salaries.

The African National Congress made the promise of providing 10 years of free and compulsory education a cornerstone of its campaign in the first all-race elections in April 1994. The Government acknowledges that this level of education cannot be accomplished overnight. One of the monumental tasks facing the Government is to merge the well-funded, properly equipped education department that ran white schools with the department that provided separate 'training' to non-white children. The Education Ministry must also incorporate the informal schools.

Apartheid education was designed to subordinate blacks in low-paying jobs. So inferior was the schooling that an estimated 15 million black adults — over a third of South Africa's population — are illiterate. Now, say education researchers, South Africa lacks the necessary skills to build a democratic society or competitive economy.

The new Government must also recreate what it calls a "culture of learning," destroyed when black schools were politicized in the anti-

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An interview with Dr. Paul McCleary

Looking back while moving ahead

For almost 40 years, Dr. Paul McCleary has worked in the international non-profit sector to advance children's well-being. Since 1988, he has been President of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF), an international NGO based in Richmond, Virginia (US), with programmes in 35 countries and an annual budget of over US$115 million. Since 1989, he has also served terms as both Deputy President and President of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, with a membership of 104 international NGOs, and since 1993, President of Interaction, a Washington-based network of 157 international child-related agencies. This year, at age 65, he is stepping down from a leadership role in all three organizations. Yet his 'retirement' is merely a short respite: he is launching a new NGO, For Children, Inc., that will emphasize implementation of national programmes of action (NPAs).

NGO Action for Children ***had the following conversation with Dr. McCleary.***

One of your major roles has been to witness and serve as a catalyst for fundamental change in the role of NGOs — from providers of direct material services for children to advocates for long-term development. When and how did that happen?

There were two historic events of significance. The first was in April 1975 when I became Executive Director of the Church World Service. The war in South Viet Nam was in its final stages and in 30 days we had to close our programme there, with a staff of 120. The second was the oil crisis during the 1970s, which provoked much of the Third World debt problems.

Both events symbolized the dilemma, even trauma, of many NGOs, which were used to providing direct services and emergency relief for children. The front pages of the morning papers set the agenda for international NGOs, yet in order to function in a more complex environment and to address the root causes of poverty, NGOs have had to broaden their mandate and incorporate development and advocacy.

That shift must have had a major impact on a child sponsorship agency such as CCF, which was used to providing direct material aid to individual children.

And it had a snowballing effect. It soon became clear that we often didn't reach the neediest or most marginalized children in especially difficult circumstances. So sponsorship became no longer an end in itself, but a vehicle to facilitate long-term child development. We then had to become more sensitive to local cultural, political and economic situations and to pay closer attention to social indicators. And this shifted our primary focus from individual children to families and communities who became participants in the process of determining and developing their own projects.

When I joined CCF in September 1988, it had 28 traditional-style field offices staffed by local people. Gradually these offices were phased into partnerships with autonomous and indigenous NGOs. CCF, like many NGOs going through this evolutionary process, was no longer a multinational American entity but a multicultural collaboration of agencies.

Were there other changes?

To meet the immense challenges of the 1990s — in population growth, poverty, education, the environment — and to respond to a more informed and demanding public, joining a global network is critical to any organization's vitality and vision, as well as a significant, if indirect, benefit to children. To reduce our isolation in Richmond, CCF opened offices in New York and Washington where we could lobby, fund-raise and do advocacy work and more sophisticated research and evaluation on the impact of our programmes. It also enabled us to develop a productive collaboration with UNICEF, the NGO Committee on UNICEF, Interaction and other organizations and networks.

Dr. Paul McCleary visits a school in Thailand.

It sounds like you really took to heart the phrase 'Think globally, act locally'. But doesn't this kind of fundamental change of direction produce resistance within a large international organization such as CCF?

Yes. On one side was the traditional view, which still counts only what you spend on direct services to a child and sees everything else as 'administrative costs' — including doctors, research, fund-raising, evaluation, a community health centre and coalition-building. On the other, experience had shown that expenditures for direct material benefit to the child can be palliative and cosmetic, but not sustainable; while funding, for example, a community water pump will have a more substantive and long-term benefit to the child.

It has been said that, as President of the NGO Committee on UNICEF, you have facilitated a more visible and pro-active committee. What do you see as its most important work?

The NGO Committee on UNICEF is an important network linking UNICEF to over 100 international NGOs working in almost every country. In recent years we have turned our attention to developing partnerships with national and indigenous NGOs by supporting or co-sponsoring conferences in such countries as Guatemala, Latvia, Poland and Zimbabwe, concentrating heavily on local follow-up.

Now the 1996 NGO Forum in Asia is in the planning stages. I think we are heading in the right direction and would like to see us continue and even increase these efforts.

From your broad experience and perspective, how do you view the relationship between NGOs and UNICEF?

As NGOs, we value the relationship with UNICEF because none of us can do individually what needs to be done for children. By itself, UNICEF has a unique capacity. But because its governing body is composed of governments, the agency has to be especially careful in raising political issues, while NGOs have greater freedom to act and to advocate. The relationship at its best is complementary.

NGOs need to take parallel actions, yet remain independent, to keep our own voice and not be subsumed by UNICEF. To do that, NGOs can work to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child or choose which of the World Summit for Children goals fit their own organizations' objectives. CCF, for example, tailored its programme to the World Summit and created its own set of parallel goals, '10 Steps to 2000'.

Is this the idea behind the new NGO you've formed, which you describe as a 'post-Summit NGO'?

We are midway to the end of the decade and still have a long way to go. We wanted to create an NGO that would help governments implement their individual NPAs and mobilize indigenous NGOs to develop their own parallel goals and programmes, consistent with the Convention and tailored to their own mandates.

You have certainly found a way to serve a need with the benefit of your long experience and commitment. But it doesn't sound as if you are retiring, or even slowing down.

I would say I am refocusing rather than retiring. There are just too many challenges ahead for anyone who has spent most of his life working for children to give up this opportunity. And there's a new freedom in not having to depend on a salary.

Education in South Africa

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apartheid struggle. In the Soweto riots of 1976, when black children protested forced education in the white language of Afrikaans, they were gunned down by police. Classrooms emptied and, even after Nelson Mandela's call for young people to "stop the nonsense and study," education in many black areas remained a sporadic effort, conducted in schools where vandalism and student insurrections against principals were, and are, common. "Students and teachers have gotten out of the habit of schooling," says education researcher Nick Taylor. "The Government will have to exercise its authority."

Many difficult issues face the new education planners: how to reverse the state-approved curriculum imbued with racism; how to put in place the new guarantee of the right to learn in any of the 11 official languages; and how to develop non-racist standards for teacher qualifications. Will the standards permit, for example, instruction by squatter camp parents who teach from what is called their 'mother instinct' but who cannot pass a certification exam?

Meanwhile, many South Africans, both black and white, are not waiting for the answers to take action. As the residents of squatter camps near Johannesburg have built and staffed informal schools, a programme has been established at Rand Afrikaans University — a former bastion of pro-apartheid whites — to train the squatter camp teachers. Over the past 18 months, 250 teachers have attended weekly sessions to learn academic content and lesson planning.

Another option is a correspondence course that will lead to teacher qualification in six years. The programme has not yet been updated: English lessons still start with a letter about vacationing in the south of France. But curriculum revisions are under way and everyone is learning as they go. "It may be only a drop in the pail," says Eliza Steyl, a University representative who is working in the squatter camps, "but you can't fill a pail without pouring in the first drop."

Drusilla Menaker is a correspondent in South Africa for Women's Feature Service.

NGO Action for Children

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NGO Action for Children is produced by the NGO Committee on UNICEF. The opinions expressed in the articles do not necessarily reflect those of UNICEF.

RESOURCES

UNICEF publications

Available in English unless otherwise noted.

Atlas of the African Child. Published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF. This atlas focuses attention on the many problems facing African children and proposes that developing human capabilities and meeting the basic needs of the child are the prerequisites and cornerstones to sustainable human development in Africa. Available from the UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa, P.O. Box 44145, Nairobi, Kenya.

Strategies for Female Education in the Middle East and North Africa identifies a wide range of strategic options that can increase the access and retention of girls in schools. The report, designed to assist education planners and policy makers, presents a comprehensive analysis of female education in the Middle East and discusses regional differences and constraints. The analysis is followed by specific strategies that countries can implement to improve girls' participation in education and increase adult female literacy. Available from the UNICEF Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa, P.O. Box 811721, Amman, Jordan.

No Need to Blame: Flashback and Hindsight reports on the development, production, distribution and audience reception of the first AIDS awareness video of UNICEF-Zimbabwe. The video itself is the first in a series of three UNICEF productions on AIDS awareness. Available from UNICEF Harare, Zimbabwe. Fax: (263-4)731-849.

Derecho de la Infancia — Adolescencia en America Latina: De la Situación Irregular a la Protección Integral, by Emilio Garcia Mendez. The book is a collection of essays that support national initiatives in favour of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is a working tool for those working for change for children in Latin America and the Caribbean. Available in Spanish from UNICEF Colombia. Fax: (57-1)31 01437.

Hygiene Education in Bangladesh, by Marieke Boot. This case-study presents an overview of hygiene education in Bangladesh. It also covers the programme on social mobilization initiated to create mass support for sanitation. Available from UNICEF New York, 3 UN Plaza, RPPL, DH-49B, New York, NY 10017, USA.

The following publications are available from the UNICEF International Child Development Centre (ICDC), Spedale degli Innocenti, Piazza SS. Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy. Fax: 3955 244 817.

The Difficult Road: The Case of NPA Decentralization in Argentina, *by Alberto Minujin and Pablo Vinocur. This paper examines Argentina's struggle to develop and decentralize its NPA while coping with strict adjustment and economic stabilization policies, following a period of hyper-inflation, falling GNP and increasing poverty rates.*

Decentralization and Policies for the Protection of Children and Adolescents in Brazil, *by Solon Magalhaes Vianna and Iara Marques, discusses Brazil's state plans of action (SPAs) that include policies for the protection of children. These SPAs are laying the groundwork for adjusting social policies within a dual context: from the Government to the private sector and from the federal level to the states and municipalities.*

The Decentralization of the National Programme of Action in Favour of Children in Chile, *by Kristina Goncalves and Francisco Goloane. This paper presents the opportunities and constraints that affect the well-being of Chilean children.*

The National Programme of Action for Children and Women in Egypt, *by Nicolas Luginbuhl. This study presents the difficulties Egypt faces in decentralizing its NPA.*

The Decentralization of the National Programme of Action: The Experience of Mongolia, by Uranbileg Bergen and Lutaa Badamhand. This Occasional Paper examines Mongolia's recent adoption of a multi-party political system and its move from a centrally planned economy to a free market.

The Development and Decentralization of the National Programme of Action for Children in Namibia, by Stephen Adkisson and Hugh Hogan, discusses the development of the NPA process in Namibia shortly after the country achieved independence.

The Philippines: A Case Study in Local Planning for Children, by Wilfreco G. Nuqui. The paper examines the Philippine Plan of Action for Children within the context of a policy regime that favours local autonomy and the decentralization of basic services.

The following Innocenti Occasional Papers are part of a Special Sub-series on Economies in Transition resulting from an ongoing research project entitled 'Public Policies and Social Conditions: Monitoring the Transition of the Market Economy in Central and Eastern Europe'.

Family Support Policies in Transitional Economies: Challenges and Constraints, by Gaspar Fajth.

Income Distribution, Poverty and Welfare in Transitional Economies: A Comparison between Eastern Europe and China, by Giovanni Andrea Cornia.

Death in Transition: The Rise of the Death Rate in Russia since 1992, by Jacob Nell and Kitty Stewart.

Other Publications

Social Integration: Approaches and Issues. A briefing paper published on the occasion of the World Summit for Social Development, March 1994. Available from the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Fax: (41-22)740 0791.

Putting Children First. Published by Bread for the World Institute and Results Educational Fund. The report examines the effectiveness of U.S. Agency for International Development Child Survival Programs in fiscal year 1991. It highlights the accomplishments of the Agency's child survival aid while expressing concerns that some activities did not match the Congressional child survival mandate. The report also offers constructive criticisms as to how child survival resources can be used more effectively. Contact Bread for the World Institute, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 1000, Silver Spring, MD 20910, USA, fax: (301) 608-2401; **or** Results Educational Fund, 236 Massachusetts Ave., N.E., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20002, USA, fax: (202) 546-3238.

Child Soldiers: The Role of Children in Armed Conflicts, by Ilene Cohn and Guy S. Goodwin-Gill. The authors assess the status of the child soldier in international law and highlight ways in which international humanitarian law fails to provide effective protection. The book also examines the consequences of participation in armed conflict for child soldiers and their families and communities. It concludes with practical suggestions for preventing recruitment and calls for a more coherent policy of treatment for children involved in acts of violence. A study on behalf of the Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, published by Oxford University Press, Walton St., Oxford OX2 6OP, UK.

Putting Gender on the Agenda: A Guide to Participating in United Nations World Conferences. This handbook provides a general introduction and practical information on how United Nations world conferences operate and how NGOs can enhance their participation in them. Available from: UNIFEM, 304 E 45th Street, 6th Floor, New York, NY 10017, USA; or NGLS, Room 6015, 866 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA.

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